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readers there is, and can be, no advantage in a mode of writing, all whose signs are physically significant; they must learn and use it as conventional only. Our own alphabet, modified to phonetic consistency, would suit their purposes equally well, — nay, they even prefer it unmodified. Prove to a man as triumphantly as you will that *laugh* is an absurd orthography, and that it is much better to write *lāf*, yet he goes on to spell *laugh* as before, and it will not help the matter to give him a new set of signs to write *lāf* with. The fate of the various phonetic systems, probably, foreshadows that of Mr. Bell's. There was no good reason for his speaking disparagingly of the labors of men like Lepsius, who, accepting as a portentous fact the immense existing prejudice in favor of familiar signs, have endeavored to work out of these something approaching to a phonetic system, — with the partial aim, moreover, of transliterating strange modes of writing as well as of speaking. Probably, he has been, by this time, disappointed by the unenthusiastic reception his discovery has met, and the little attention it has attracted. He will have to learn to be content with addressing chiefly those interested in phonetic science, instead of the great public; with seeking the sympathy and criticism of his equals, instead of imposing his system under governmental authority, as something finished and immaculate, upon the community at large. Its claim to extraordinary support is not greater than that of any other new and improved scientific nomenclature; and the condemnation which its author expects to see passed upon the Derby Cabinet, for neglect of so grand an opportunity, will, we presume, be indefinitely suspended. In its own proper sphere, and especially with a clearer and more apprehensible method of presentation, it may be relied on to do much good, attracting toward and facilitating phonetic studies, and perhaps contributing a chief part to that system; not a theoretically perfect one, for the conditions of the case admit of none such, but a system more successfully compromised, more nicely adjusted, to the ascertained needs of the transcription of all languages than any other, which the future is to bring forth.

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12. — *The Earthly Paradise. A Poem.* By WILLIAM MORRIS, Author of "The Life and Death of Jason." Boston: Roberts Brothers. 1868. 8vo. pp. 676.

MR. MORRIS's last poem, "The Life and Death of Jason," proved him to possess so much intellectual energy, and so large a poetical capacity, that we are not surprised to find him, after only a year's interval, publishing a work equally considerable in size and merit. The author's

treatment of the legend of Jason, whatever may be thought of the success of his manner and of the wisdom of an attempt to revive an antiquated and artificial diction, certainly indicated a truly vigorous and elastic genius. It exhibited an imagination copious and varied, an inventive faculty of the most robust character, and the power to sustain a heavy burden without staggering or faltering. It had, at least, the easy and abundant flow which marks the effusions of genius, and it was plainly the work of a mind which takes a serious pleasure in large and formidable tasks. Very much such another task has Mr. Morris set himself in the volume before us. He has not, indeed, to observe that constant unity of tone to which he had pledged himself in telling the adventures of Jason, but he is obliged, as in his former work, to move all armed and equipped for brilliant feats, and to measure his strength as frequently and as lustily.

"The Earthly Paradise" is a series of tales in verse, founded, for the most part, on familiar legends and traditions in the Greek mythology. Each story is told with considerable fulness, so that by the time the last is finished the volume numbers nearly seven hundred pages, or about twenty thousand lines. Seven hundred pages of fantastic verse, in these days of clamorous intellectual duties, run a very fair chance of being, at best, somewhat neglectfully read, and to secure a deferential inspection they must carry their excuse in very obvious characters. The excuse of Mr. Morris's volume is simply its charm. We know not what force this charm may exert upon others, but under its influence we have read the book with unbroken delight and closed it with real regret, — a regret tempered only by the fact that the publishers announce a second series of kindred tales. Mr. Morris's book is frankly a work of entertainment. It deals in no degree with actualities, with worldly troubles and burdens and problems. You must forget these things to take it up. Forget them for a few moments, and it will remind you of fairer, sweeter, and lighter things, — things forgotten or grudgingly remembered, things that came to you in dreams and waking reveries, and odd idle moments stolen from the present. Every man, we fancy, has a latent tenderness for the past, a vague unwillingness to let it become extinct, an unavowed desire to preserve it as a pleasure-ground for the fancy. This desire, and his own peculiar delight in it, are very prettily suggested by the author in a short metrical Preface: —

"The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names remembered,

Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day."

He tells us then the story of Atalanta's race, the tale of Perseus and Andromeda, the story of Cupid and Psyche, the story of Alcestis, and that of Pygmalion; and along with these as many quaint mediæval tales, equally full of picturesque beauty and of human meaning. In what better company could we forget the present? and remember not only the past, but the perpetual, the eternal,—the constant loves and fears and sorrows of mankind? It is very pleasant to wander, as Mr. Morris leads us, among scenes and figures of no definite time, and often no definite place,—except in so far as these are spots untrodden by our own footsteps,—and mortals (and immortals) deeply distinct from our own fellows. The men and women are simpler and stronger and happier than we, and their haunts are the haunts of deities and half-deities. But they are nevertheless essentially men and women, and Mr. Morris, for all that he has dived so deep into literature for his diction, is essentially a human poet. We know of nothing in modern narrative poetry more touching and thrilling, nothing that commands more forcibly the sympathy of the heart, the conscience, and the senses, than the Prologue to these tales:—

"Certain gentlemen and mariners of Norway [the argument runs] having considered all that they had heard of the Earthly Paradise, set sail to find it, and, after many troubles and the lapse of many years came, old men, to some Western land, of which they had never before heard; there they died, when they had dwelt there certain years, much honored of the strange people."

It is their "many troubles," as related by one of their number, that form the substance of the Prologue,—troubles grim, terrible, and monstrous,—memories all scented with ocean brine and dyed with deep outlandish hues. The charm of these wild Norse wanderings is the same charm as that which pervaded the author's "Jason,"—the mystery and peril of a long and vague sea-voyage, and the fellowship and mutual devotion of a hundred simple adventurous hearts. And the charm, moreover, is thoroughly genuine,—the elements of interest are actually present,—the author writes from the depths of his fancy. There blows through the poem a strong and steady ocean breeze, as it were, laden with island spices, and the shouts of mariners, and the changing music of shoreward tides. We have no space to retail the various adventures of these simple-souled explorers; we must direct the reader to the original source. We may say, in especial, that for boys and girls there can be no better reading, just now, than this breezy Prologue,—none answering better the constant boyish need to

project the fancy over the seas, and the no less faithful feminine impulse to revel in the beautiful and the tender.

The best earthly paradise which these storm-scathed mariners attain is to sit among the elders of the Western city which finally harbors them, and to linger out the autumn of their days in listening to spring-tide stories. It is in this manner that Mr. Morris introduces his tales, and *par le temps court* we, for our part, expect no better Elysium than to sit and read them. We are unable to dwell upon the distinctive merits of the various stories; they differ in subject, in length, in character, in all things more than in merit. Of the classical tales we perhaps prefer the version of Pygmalion's legend; of the mediæval or romantic, the story of "Ogier the Dane." But they are all alike radiant with a warm and lustrous beauty, — the beauty of art mild and generous in triumph. They are, in manner, equally free, natural, and pure. Mr. Morris can trust himself; his imagination has its own essential modesty. It may, however, seem odd that we should pronounce his style natural, resting as it does on an eminently conventional basis. Very many persons, we find, have a serious quarrel with this artificial and conscious element in his manner. It gives them an impression of coldness, stiffness, and diletanteism. But for ourselves, we confess — and we are certainly willing to admit that it may be by a fault of our own mind — we have found no difficulty in reconciling ourself to it. Mr. Morris's diction is doubtless far from perfect in its kind. It is as little purely primitive as it is purely modern. The most that we can say of it is that, on the whole, it recalls Chaucer. But Mr. Morris wears it with such perfect grace, and moves in it with so much ease and freedom, — with so little appearance of being in bands or in borrowed raiment, — that one may say he has fairly appropriated it and given it the stamp of his individuality. How he came finally to form his style, — the remote causes of his sympathy with the language which he has made his own, — the history of his literary growth, — these are questions lying below the reach of criticism. But they are questions possessing the deeper interest, in that the author's present achievement is a very considerable fact. None but a mind of remarkable power could have infused into the torpid and senseless forms of a half-forgotten tongue the exuberant vitality which pervades these pages. To our perception, they are neither cold nor mechanical, they glow and palpitate with life. This is saying the very best thing we can think of, and assigning Mr. Morris's volume a place among the excellent works of English literature, a place directly beside his "Jason."